

Visioning



Community Reinvestment Strategy



Cluster 9 Visioning

As a key component in the Community Reinvestment Strategy, Cluster 9 stakeholders participated in the visioning process. Visioning allowed community members to synthesize the information gathered in the focus group and data collection phase and to prioritize by consensus the steps to take to overcome existing challenges and realize potential opportunities. The Priorities were identified and ranked under each of the focus group themes (housing, transportation, neighborhood commercial facilities, youth development, and job centers).

After working in small groups to prioritize the visioning statements by theme, the top three statements were presented to the entire group of community stakeholders to be ranked (regardless of theme). Each person in attendance rated the issues by using stickers with assigned point values. The results of the session are as follows:

Points

- 177 Improve information network of existing services and programming at the neighborhood level.
- 166 Encourage enforcement of all codes and City services to remove or rehabilitate substandard housing, to attract and retain young and elderly people to the city, and increase levels of homeownership.
- 107 Plan for the stability of commercial districts through business associations that interact with the neighborhood and encourage involvement and communication.
- 97 Increase participation by financial institutions and corporations at the community level to enhance understanding and capacity to assist with financial needs.
- 52 Encourage small business development thorough technical assistance that includes developing employment and training opportunities.
- 50 Promote quality commercial districts by enforcing existing zoning regulations to encourage mixed-use; a variety of businesses that reflect the character of the neighborhood through a comprehensive plan.
- 46 Promote strong block clubs that encourage high levels of community involvement and promote community ownership of public streets.
- 40 Encourage a higher level of community and institutional involvement in providing services and programming for our youth at the neighborhood level.

- 37 Provide job placement opportunities for area residents on major projects, (i.e. casinos, stadia, hotels, etc.)
- 25 Develop training programs for jobs with viable growth opportunities.
- 20 Facilitate better service by SMART and DDOT to suburban locations.
- 20 Encourage the use of alternative transportation modes (i.e. Jitneys, flexible mini-vans, carpools, taxis, etc.)
- 5 Encourage local employment for local people through dialogue between businesses, employers, and the community.
- 1 Promote employment opportunities, including job readiness training for youth 15-18 years of age.

The priorities were enlisted in future meetings through which goals and recommendations were developed the areas for greatest development potential were mapped out (See Recommendations Summary in Section V). Throughout the process, the concept of a high quality of life in Cluster 9 was consistently featured as the vision for future activities. Additionally, several focus group topic goals overlapped, which were combined under several visioning statements.

Following are the vision statements which served as a guiding focus for these recommendations:

1. Strengthen existing neighborhoods through community support.

Several very strong organizations are actively engaged in community-initiated development in Cluster 9 which can serve as a model for other neighborhoods to emulate. These groups are undertaking activities such as purchasing abandoned houses and rehabilitating them for resale, promoting neighborhood housing opportunities, providing new homeowner assistance, and sponsoring local schools to encourage greater youth participation in community efforts. By forming a coalition of neighborhood organizations, the information network of existing services and programs and the organizational capacity of each group should increase.

2. Homeownership in Cluster 9 is an important value that can stabilize neighborhoods, attract a wide variety of families interested in living in a quality environment and promote stewardship of the community.

Stakeholders felt that the quality of neighborhoods in Cluster 9 could attract new residents to the city and encourage young people seeking their first home to stay in the city if affordable home-ownership opportunities were provided as incentives. Similarly, promotion of the homeownership opportunities in Cluster 9 to employees of major job centers in the city would diversify neighborhoods. Finally, the goal of racial, income and age diversity in neighborhoods was highly valued as a part of the quality of life issue that should be reflected by homeownership in the district.

3. By taking an active role in commercial district revitalization, Cluster 9 stakeholders can promote commercial redevelopment that reflects the quality and character of surrounding neighborhoods and provide the needed goods and services to area residents.

Stakeholders consistently expressed dismay about the gradual loss of quality shopping opportunities in the Cluster and inconvenience of suburban shopping. The consumer expenditure power of the Cluster does not warrant the lack of commercial opportunities, blighted conditions and perception of low quality

at the street level. The additional advantage of commercial redevelopment toward improving the physical image of Cluster 9 would enhance the residential quality of life by providing districts which function much as a city square, offering a sense of place in contrast to the deteriorated conditions present at virtually every crossroads in the district. Benefits of commercial development would also include expansion of the employment base through construction jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Finally, community organizations can join forces with business district organizations to promote the construction and maintenance of a quality shopping environment.

4. Investment in opportunities for youth development should reflect active participation by families in the community.

Several strategies for youth development coincided with community revitalization, as the investment in youth should also generate results at the neighborhood level. Organizations seeking to make improvements in recreational facilities, employment and educational opportunities, and the physical appearance of the community should actively seek youth involvement in the process. Active involvement by the youngest members of the community in the process should generate lifelong connections to the community and create better citizens for the future.